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APPLICATION

FOR

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TITLE: INDICATING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
INTERNET WEB PAGES

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INDICATING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INTERNET WEB PAGES

Background

This invention relates generally to Internet browsers.

Internet browser software generally provides a window which enables the user to provide input commands for viewing Internet web pages. A number of users use a bookmark or favorite system to link quickly to web pages of interest. Thus, the user may repeatedly return to a given web page to determine whether new information is available. Sometimes web pages indicate new information by highlighting or otherwise pointing to information which is changed.

However, in many cases, the user is forced to scan through one or more pages at a given web site to determine whether there is any new information which may be of interest to the user. This can be a time consuming and laborious job.

Thus, there is a need for a simpler way to determine the differences between web pages over time.

Summary

In accordance with one aspect, a method includes causing a processor-based system to difference a cached and current version of an Internet web page. The difference between the cached and current versions is then indicated.

Other aspects are set forth in the accompanying detailed description and claims.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 is a depiction of an exemplary web page;

5 Figure 2 is a later version of the exemplary web page shown in Figure 1;

Figure 3 is a depiction of a web browser display achieved by differencing the pages shown in Figures 1 and 2;

10 Figure 4 is a flow chart for software for implementing one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 5 is a block diagram of a processor-based system in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention; and

15 Figure 6 is a view of a web browser navigation bar in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

Detailed Description

In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, a web browser may include software to enable the differencing or subtraction of a cached web page from a currently available web page. Using the differencing functionality, one can determine what new features have been added to a given web page. This avoids the need to carefully scrutinize the new page and to manually compare 25 it to the cached version of the web page.

For example, in one embodiment of the present invention, at the click of a mouse button, one can determine what are the differences between the old and new versions. The viewer can then examine only the changes to 5 find the new information.

Referring to Figure 1, an earlier version of an exemplary web page is illustrated. This page may be cached by the web browser. Figure 2 illustrates a later version of the same web page. Referring to Figure 6, a browser 10 navigation bar may include an icon labeled "subtract". When the user selects the subtract icon on the browser window navigation bar, the cached web page, illustrated in Figure 1, may be differenced or subtracted from a current web page indicated in Figure 2. The result is the 15 difference between the cached and current web pages. The differences may be displayed as indicated in Figure 3.

Thus, in one embodiment of the present invention, when the user operates the navigation bar subtract icon, the 20 cached version of a web page and the currently displayed version are automatically subtracted. As a result, only the new material contained in the current version is displayed, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Referring to Figure 4, the user initially launches a current web page as indicated in block 10. The browser 25 then loads the current page from the web server as indicated in block 12. When the user mouse clicks on the

subtract icon as indicated in block 14, the software compares the cached image for that web page to the current server image in one embodiment of the present invention. A display with the repeated information blanked may show only 5 the new information, as indicated in block 16.

In one embodiment of the present invention, the software may be provided as a plug-in to an existing browser. In another embodiment of the present invention, the browser software may be originally provided with the 10 subtract or differencing functionality.

With the subtract functionality, the user then has the option to toggle between a display which shows only the new information, such as Figure 3, and the current web page (block 18, Figure 4). This toggling may be implemented for 15 example by repeatedly mouse clicking on the subtract icon on a navigation bar, for example. Selecting the subtract icon the first time may display the difference image. Selecting the icon again returns the display to the current server image.

20 Referring to Figure 5, a processor-based system 22 includes a processor 24 coupled to a chipset 26 in one embodiment of the present invention. The chipset 26 may couple a system memory 28, a graphics accelerator 30 and a display 32. In addition, the chipset 26 may be coupled to 25 a bus 34 in turn coupled to an interface 36 which may be part of a chipset. The interface 36 in turn couples a hard

disk drive 38 which may store the software 20. The software 20 may, in one embodiment of the present invention, be an embodiment of a web browser or may be plug in software which operates with an existing web browser.

5 Comparison software is commercially available. For example, the Netscape Web Publisher compares different versions of a file. The output is a hypertext mark up language (HTML) file displayed in a web browser window that highlights where the versions differ.

10 Instead of merely displaying only the new material, the new material may be displayed in a highlighted fashion. For example, new material may be underlined or may be displayed in different color so that the viewer can see the new material on the display of the current web page.

15 In still another alternative, instead of responding to the user's selection of an icon, the system may automatically provide an indication of the differences between the two web pages. For example, in one embodiment of the present invention, the current web page is 20 initially, automatically displayed with highlighting, indicating the new material added to the cached web page. This avoids the need for the user to select the differencing functionality and still allows uninterrupted viewing of the current version of the web page.

25 In still another embodiment of the present invention, instead of displaying only the new material, in one

embodiment of the present invention, the new material may be displayed in one way and any deleted material may be displayed in another way. For example, in one embodiment of the present invention, new material may be indicated in 5 one color and deleted material may be indicated in a different color.

As yet another embodiment of the present invention, the differencing software may determine whether there are different links provided in a new version of the web page. 10 Thus, the new links, indicated by uniform resource locators, may be identified separately from other changes in response to a user inquiry. As still another alternative, any new links may be highlighted in a special way, such as by a distinct color.

15 As still another embodiment of the present invention, in connection with web pages which provide chat or feedback information, any new feedback responses, which have been received since the last time the responses were checked by a user, may be highlighted or otherwise indicated. For 20 example, in connection with stock comment pages, users may provide a running commentary of chat responses or messages on a given topic about a given stock. Instead of requiring the user to remember the user's last viewed response in the series of responses, a differencing mechanism may be 25 utilized to determine the difference between the information last contained on the page and the information

now on the page. Instead of displaying all of the information, the user may be provided with a list of only those new comments received after the user last checked the page.

5 If desired, the software 20 may also automatically or selectively cache each viewed page. This may ensure that a given page is available for subsequent comparison.

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• 15 While the present invention has been described with respect to a limited number of embodiments, those skilled in the art will appreciate numerous modifications and variations therefrom. It is intended that the appended claims cover all such modifications and variations as fall 20 within the true spirit and scope of this present invention.

What is claimed is: